



Christmas Day - Saturday Dec 25th, 2021

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

We light the light of Christ.

Into a world often harsh and violent, the Christ child was born in vulnerability and innocence. Even while death was threatened by the powers that be, and while the shadows of fear covered the earth, hope itself was born that night; peace was embodied; joy was proclaimed; and love came to live with us, Emmanuel.

Into this same world, we bring the light of Christ.

We sing: Come, let's walk ...

Tune: Twinkle, twinkle little star
words: Jennie Gordon, Used with permission

Come, let's walk the path of light,
through the darkness of the night.
Sing with hope and joy and peace,
life emerges, love's increase.
Christ is here, who makes us one.
Christ is here, the day has come!

Call to worship

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light
For a Child has been born to us
a son given to us.
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting father, Prince of Peace.**

Come Child of God
and melt our hearts of stone
Come stand in the Light
Emmanuel: God is with us.

Acknowledging



As we gather, we
acknowledge the
traditional custodians of

this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing

O come, all ye faithful vv 1,2,3,6 & 7

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him, born the king of angels:
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

True God of true God, Light of light eternal,
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore him ...

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks,
draw nigh with holy fear;
we too will thither, bend our joyful footsteps:
O come, let us adore him ...

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation
sing all ye citizens of heaven above
Glory to God, glory in the highest:
O come, let us adore him ...

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him ...

O come, all ye faithful TIS 304
Possibly by John Francis Wade c.1711-1786 Adeste Fideles
Used with permission CCLI 206 729



Prayer

God who chose to come to us,
we are finally still enough
to come to you.
All the preparations and presents,
all the cooking and cleaning
all the cards and conversations
we leave them all, for this time ...
**and we come to you with grateful hearts,
inviting you to fill us
with your love and hope, your joy and peace**

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**inviting the child of love to be born
in the manger of our hearts**

(stillness)

God of light,

you came as a baby into our world,

**forgive us for ignoring the children
who are hungry and lost around us.**

You became weak for our sake,

**forgive us when we think that
power is the only way to live.**

You became poor to serve the world,

**forgive us for our obsession with
wealth and material goods.**

You became one of us,

so we might draw closer to you,

God of Christmas mornings,

so have mercy on us.

Comfort us, as you touch us

with your steadfast love;

strengthen us as you pour out

your faithfulness on us;

help us to sing the good news

of the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord,

your Child, into our world.

(stillness)

In the silence of that first morning,

grace took a breath,

a tiny hand clutched love,

the Light of life came into the world

that we might be forgiven.

We join all around us in singing the glad songs

of Christmas joy this morning

and all the days to come. Amen.

Listening

Read: Psalm 98 & Luke 2:1-20

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

The Christmas light displays around my neighbourhood this year are incredible. Some houses have thousands of coloured lights draping every conceivable surface, with lots of

illuminated and blow up Fathers Christmas, snowmen, and reindeer, and even kangaroos, giraffes, dogs, and a sloth. In most displays, stars are the only items that have anything to do with the Biblical Christmas stories. This reflects, I believe, the secular nature of most Australian's Christmas celebrations.

But that's how it has always been in Australia. When Christmas came around in 1788 at the newly settled Sydney Cove, the Reverend Richard Johnson tried his best to bring Christ to the colonisers, but in a land where rum was the standard currency he was up against those who only wanted to indulge as much as possible.

Often the new settlers had to be quite flexible. The explorer Ludwig Leichhardt in 1844 reported that he and his companions had a Christmas dinner of suet pudding and stewed cockatoos! Others ate scrub turkey, pigeons, ducks and kangaroos. In this new land, there always was meat for those who weren't too fussy about its form. And many made sarsaparilla, honey mead or hop beer to drink. Australians have always had the reputation for being enterprising.

Even in the midst of the gold rush, the miners took time to celebrate, often making plum duff puddings which sometimes they added a few small gold nuggets in the same way that later generations added threepences and sixpences.

The reality is that most Australians, as much as they may protest about too much money being spent, or too big a crowd at the shopping centres, or too much commercialism of Christmas and too much pressure to spend and overeat, and the relentless Christmas jingles playing everywhere, do enjoy their Christmas celebrations.

As Christians, we may lament the commercialisation of Christmas and its increasing secularisation as a family rather than church feast, but to me there is something very touching about the efforts that so many people make to share the joy of the season. The Christmas lights are an example of this sharing of joy. Perhaps

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rather than to lament the high ratio of Santas and snowmen to Nativity Scenes we might well be better to think about how we can better share the true message of the season. Maybe we should put nativity scenes in our windows or on the lawn, or think creatively about how we can share the true Christmas story.

Christmas is, I believe, a day for grace, for joy, for celebration, and not for moralism or censoriousness. For this day, above all days, we celebrate the crazy and unlimited love of God. This is the day when God gave all, by giving to us that which was God's most precious gift- God's Son. He was given in utter vulnerability, as a helpless, dependent baby. God risked his precious child when he joined humanity in the realness of human life. On this day, as the fourth century poet Ephraim of Syria observed, 'a baby holds the reigns of the universe.'

As G.K. Chesterton put it, this is the day when 'the hands that had made the sun and stars were too small to reach the huge heads of the cattle.'

Jesus, the Word of God, who from the very beginning was with God, as creator, comes to us. This is God's wildly extravagant gift to us. This is mystery. This is grace. This should bring forth awe and wonder. Perhaps that is why children, whose sense of wonder is still intact can best appreciate this season.

Perhaps, we too need to be open to owning again the wonder, the mystery and the grace of this season. May we respond in wonder, awe, love and joy to the great gift of God, Jesus Christ, this Christmas. Amen.

Singing TiS 313 Good Christians

Good Christians all, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Listen well to what we say,
Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow,
And He is in the manger now!
Christ is born today; Christ is born today!

Good Christians all, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now you hear of endless bliss,
Jesus Christ was born for this:
He has opened heaven's door
And you are blest for evermore;
Christ was born for this;
Christ was born for this!

Good Christians all, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now you need not fear the grave,
Jesus Christ was born to save;
Calls you one and calls you all
To gain His everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save;
Christ was born to save!

John Mason Neale, alt.
Used with Permission CCLI 241 839

Responding: ***Prayers for World & Community***

You came as a child amongst us, Word of life
and so, today, we pray for the children.
For every child:
safe and loving arms to hold them,
nourishment so that they can grow,
adequate and appropriate health care,
a community of love and belonging,
songs to stir them, stories to locate them,
and safe spaces to explore and to learn about life.

And where there is lack, God of abundance,
help us to notice and to not look away,
to offer what we can,
and to bring your good news
of the wildest, most outrageous love
born this day, in the strangest of ways.

You came as a child amongst us, out of love,
and so, today, we pray for the world:
let peace prevail,
help us to live in harmony with each other,
and with all living things
supporting ecosystems that are struggling,
cleaning up our act and living lightly,

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learning from and honouring the First Peoples of this ancient land.

You came as a child amongst us, light of life and so, today, we pray for ourselves:
Comfort those who meet this day with grief, bound up by loss and sadness, let their memories bring them blessing.
Support those who meet this day with loneliness, and help them to find a place at the table.
Bless those who meet this day with hurt, let them find a healing balm in the ongoing story of your presence.

Bless each of us,
as we seek to carry the light of Christ this day and every day, as together we pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Notices

Share food, shelter and lifesaving support with a refugee in Ethiopia this Christmas

Since 1949, compassionate Christians like you have followed Rev Frank Byatt's legacy, coming together each Christmas across Australia and the world to provide safety in exile for people forced from their homes by conflict and disaster. Your gift through the Christmas Bowl will support local partners to meet urgent needs and help create a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au>

Singing Joy to the World - TiS 268

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive its king;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;
let us our songs employ;
while fields and streams, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748 alt., based on Psalm 98 ANTIOCH
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Blessing

We have heard the story as it begins.
It is yet to end.

It continues to be re-born in us,
the spark of the divine in us
as we play our part in God's mission
in the world.

We leave from here, to live that story,
to tell the story again
of love born at Christmas
and to be bearers of peace, love,
hope and joy.

May Emmanuel, God-with-us,
be with you and remain with you always.
Amen.

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